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GIFTS, BEFORE AND AFTER DEATH.

From the little town of Pana, Ill., comes a news item to the effect that a wealthy farmer named D. M. White, has just filed deeds distributing a handsome estate equally among his eight children. He had already given to each of them a farm of 180 acres. The knowledge of these previous gifts caused comment to be made on the filing of the later deeds, and some people had considerable to say about a man giving away his fortune, even to his own children. It is probably entirely natural that this comment should be heard, as it must be admitted that Mr. White's action was out of the ordinary course of events. Yet had he waited until after death had claimed him to make this equitable distribution of his estate, there would have been no comment at all. A little thought will show that the best way in the world in which a man can distribute his estate among those to whom he wishes to give it, is to give it to them while he is still on earth to see that his wishes are carried out; but comparatively few men do it. It has come to be so much the custom to contest wills after the passing away of their makers that it may almost be said to be the exception and not the rule when a will is allowed to be probated without dispute.

As a man who has accumulated wordly goods worth consideration approaches the close of life, he, as a matter of course, realizes that he can not carry his possessions beyond the grave, and makes plans for the bestowal thereof according to his desires. The law makes provision for such distribution by providing tribunals with especial jurisdiction over wills and estates of the dead. But the probate courts and the machinery connected therewith cost money, and no estate comes through them quite as large as when the process of legal and formal adjustment was begun. Besides this expense, there are always delays and tedious formalities. All of these can be avoided by making ante-mortem instead of post-mortem distribution of property.

There are signs all about us that a good many very wealthy men recognize this fact, and to this recognition we may in a measure credit some of the great gifts to charity, religious institutions and universities. There have been some notable instances of recognition of the wisdom of this course, but probably none so strikingly illustrative as is found in the history of the founding of Vassar College, the world-famous female educational institution. No doubt there are a great many people in the country who are familiar with the facts, but there are many times the number who do not know that the great school was built with brewery money. The founder was Matthew Vassar, a brewer. He had made a good deal of money making and selling beer, and he went abroad to visit his old home in England. Walking along a quiet street in London he noticed a tablet on some ...'s palace that the emblem was unfurled to the breeze.

All the excitement of the twenty-five turbulent years to follow had their rallying point around the building his property to some good cause after his death. This tablet caused him to make the gift while still alive. On his return to this country, he immediately set about building a school for girls, and he saw the beneficial results of his gift "in his life time." As long as he lived there was always a room in the college kept in readiness for him, and he often spent weeks at a time there.

It was a splendid example of common sense, this doing of the good work "in his life time," and many millionaires of today are doing the same thing. It is equally the part of wisdom even where the estate is to be divided among relatives, to make the distribution "in the life time" of the distributor.

A WHOLESOME CRUSADE.

The Rev. Father Bernard Vaughan, a noted London preacher, who is as fearless as he is eloquent, has been doing good service of late in denouncing what he calls cat and dog worshippers.

In ancient Egypt, as is known, the cat was a sacred animal, and a Roman consul is said to have deified his horse. We have no record of any heathen people who worshiped the dog. In the Biblical records the canine species seems to have been the type of degradation among Jews and Gentiles alike.

The feeling is voiced in such expressions as "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" It was left for moderns, and mainly fashionable moderns, to carry the pet dog cult to a point which Father Vaughan characterizes as a species of idolatry.

That he antagonized a deep-seated sentiment is shown by the fact that he has ever since been the recipient of reams of superfine note paper scribbed with angry protests. One correspondent writes: "My dog is dearer to me than anyone else on earth." Another: "You may say what you like, but my dog has more logic than any man and more love than any woman I ever met."

These notes would no doubt be substantially duplicated in any of our own large cities should the animal pet-worshipers be similarly provoked. The prevalence of the dog fad may be judged by the number of men and women seen leading their pets around in leashes.

A smartly dressed woman holding in one hand a whip and in the other a string attached to her dog's collar, promenading the street or the park, seems to imagine that she is the whole thing and is unconscious of the absurd figure she cuts. A man similarly occupied protrudes his chest with the evident feeling that he is a swell and is blind to the unmanliness of it.

What rational and rightly attuned human mind and soul will not sympathize with the good clergyman? We pay our meed of admiration to the heroic St. Bernard rescuing travelers from the snow, as we see it pictured in our juvenile school reader. We acknowledge the usefulness of the shepherd dog; of the pointer and setter in the hunting field; of the trusty watch dog with his honest bark, paying his deep-mouthed welcome to his master.

Let us hope that the London preacher's demonstration will be followed by a crusade in all civilized countries for a more rational use of animal pets. It is a case in which sentiment, however kindly in its origin, should not be suffered to run to extremes.

THE MASTERLESS TRAIN.

Another engineer has died while his train was running at full speed. His fireman prevented a wreck. In this instance, the train ran by a regular stop before the fireman noticed that anything was wrong, and it passed two other regular stops before he could climb from his place to the cab. A conductor will be on the carpet for not stopping this train the instant it passed the first station. The airbrake is always in reach of the conductor of a passenger train.

The incident illustrates again the danger of running trains with only one man in the cab. It was only chance that gave this train a clear track for the distance it ran before the fireman could climb up to the controlling mechanism. Railroad experts certainly should be able to see the necessity of having another man right at hand in case the engineer becomes incapacitated, and as there are locomotives whose arrangement makes this condition the normal one, it is surprising that any other kind is used. Here is one preventive of wrecks which can be plainly seen. Why not do this little toward keeping down the awful record of railroad casualties?

In the latest thriller on the stage the girl is placed in a narrow chest on the table, a lighted taper is applied to her hair and the chest is locked. When the chest is opened ...

John L. Sullivan says he is going out to Indiana to wallow in the mud for the rheumatism. Evidently the ancient gladiator has reached the time in life when he likes to look for a soft place to fall before lettting go his hold upon the superstructure of the water wagon.

A Sharon, Pa., millionaire, according to dispatches, "shot himself three times in the bathroom." We point to this polite reference to the gentleman's highball receptacle as an illustration of the extreme delicacy of the American press.

Arthur Bisbane is a brilliant editorial writer, but when he advises woman not to button her shirtwaist in the back he is getting way beyond his depth.

"The cleanliness of the mind is displayed in the outward garments," says a writer. Hardly true of the ball player who has just made a slide for the home plate with the winning run.

Winter must find the lap of spring soft sitting this year. He is evidently reluctant to leave it.

A Newport News bureau of information over Pine Beach way would be money well invested.

There is one good thing about the Brownsville investigation. It keeps Foraker from talking about anything else.

New York has a school of politics. It should be fumigated twice a week and watched carefully all the time.

Even with a baseball pass good in 236 cities, Mr. Roosevelt can go to only one game at a time.

"Pete," the White House bull dog, Washington news was at its lowest ebb.

WITH THE PARAGRAPHERS

In the language of E. H. Harriman, this is a queer year in politics and weather.—Wall-Street Journal.

It is a strange thing that we cannot excuse even our own faults—when we see them in another fellow.—New Orleans Item.

The heir apparent to the Spanish throne is reported to be bearing up well under the burden of his 12 names.—Albany Journal.

"Abe" Ruef's streak of luck in his palmiest days was never as wide as his present streak of yellow.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

In Boston a hotel orchestra was fined for playing on Sunday. The judge didn't offer any recommendation of mercy.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Solomon said hurriedly that all men are liars, leaving it to the President of the United States to name the principal offenders.—Dallas News.

A Connecticut paper says it admires Mr. Taft because he is "Johnny on the spot." And the spot is certainly never in doubt about it.—Washington Post.

There are to be 15 national conventions in Denver this summer. And Denver is so far from the sources of supplies, as far as bottled goods are concerned, too.—Chicago Record-Herald.

International friendship is a good deal like friendship between business men. It lasts until interests conflict.—Boston Globe.

A Vassar girl at an athletic contest is said to have put the shot 30 feet. But what about the direction?—Buffalo Express.

Col. Henry Watterson's dark horse is pasturing in the lemon patch.—Baltimore Sun.

The election of Stephenson, a fabulously rich lumberman, to succeed Spooner of Wisconsin, is another sign that the Republicans are taking to the tall timber.—Charleston News-Courier.